

## Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /068 W

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R 081035Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5128

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TS, FR

SUBJECT:FRENCH MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOURGES TOVISIT

TUNISIA DECEMBER 10-13

1. TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 4 THAT FRENCH MINISTER OF DEFENSE YVON BOURGES WILL VISIT TUNIS DECEMBER 10-13. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE VISIT WILL "PERMIT BROADENING AND REINFORCING USEFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND TUNISIAN ARMED SERVICES." GOT SOURCES CONTINUED SAYING THAT VISIT TAKES PLACE AT TIME WHEN TUNISIA HAS DECIDED TO AUGMENT ITS DEFENSE BUDGET IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN ITS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, WHICH CONSEQUENTLY WILL ENVISAGE PURCHASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM ABROAD. PREPARATORY PRESS TREATMENT FOR VISIT NOTES THAT TUNISIAN DEFENSE AUGMENTATION PLANS FORESEE ACQUISITION OF UNSPECIFIED RECONNAISSANCE AND TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING HELICOPTERS, SHIPS AND AMX-13 TANKS FROM FRANCE, OVER FOUR-YEAR PERIOD COMMENCING IN 1974 FOR A TOTAL OF 80 MILLION FRANCS. FRANCE IS TO GIVE GOT DIRECT GRANT OF 28 MILLION FRANCS OVER FOUR-YEAR PERIOD, BALANCE TO BE FINANQED B GOT. IN ADDITION, GOF WILL DEFRAY EXPENSES FOR 291 TUNISIANS TRAINING IN FRENCH MILITARY

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SCHOOLS IN 1976. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT CONTINUED WITH DETAILED

DESCRIPTION OF FRENCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO TUNISIA  
SINCE 1964.

2. COMMENT: NONE OF THE ABOVE FIGURES ON PAST AND PRESENT  
FRENCH AID IS NEW BUT SERVES AS USEFUL STAGE SETTING AS GOT  
OBVIOUSLY WILL TRY TO MAKE IMPORTANT AND PROFITABLE EVENT  
OF BOURGES' VISIT. DURING COURSE OF VISIT TUNISIAN DEFENSE  
MINISTRY WILL NO DOUBT STRIVE TO OBTAIN SIGNIFICANT INCREASES  
OVER CURRENT LEVELS, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME UNDERSTANDING  
HAS ALREADY BEEN REACHED. DRAWING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE,  
WE CAN EXPECT "IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT" TO BE MADE AT CLOSE  
OF VISIT INDICATING THAT FRENCH-TUNISIAN MILITARY  
COOPERATION HAS INDEED "BEEN BROADENED AND REINFORCED."  
WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS THAT FRENCH POLITICAL AND MILITARY  
CIRCLES HAVE BEEN DISPLEASED OVER LEVELS OF PLANNED GOT  
ARMS PURCHASES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING U.S. AND  
AUSTRIA, AND BOURGES' VISIT MAY SERVE AS OPPORTUNITY TO  
CLEAR AIR AND REDRESS BALANCE.

3. ON FINAL EVALUATION, HOWEVER, VISIT IS LIKELY TO BE  
OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE POLITICALLY THAN MILITARILY.  
GOT WILL NO DOUBT MAKE MUCH PUBLIC ADO ABOUT FRENCH  
CONNECTION AND IMPLICATION OF POLITICAL COMMITMENT ON PART  
OF FRANCE TO TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE AND WELL-BEING. THIS  
WOULD COMPLEMENT SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN  
VOICED BY U.S. OVER COURSE OF PAST YEAR AND WOULD FIT  
NICELY WITH TUNISIA'S TRADITIONAL STRATEGY OF LOOKING  
TOWARDS BOTH THE U.S. AND FRANCE FOR ITS SECURITY.  
INTENDED ADDRESSEES OF THIS MESSAGE WILL AS IN PAST BE  
ALGERIA AND LIBYA.  
MULCAHY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MINISTERIAL VISITS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** coburnhl  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976TUNIS08554  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760453-0806  
**From:** TUNIS  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19761260/aaaabzxw.tel  
**Line Count:** 92  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** coburnhl  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** FRENCH MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOURGES TOVISIT TUNISIA DECEMBER 10-13  
**TAGS:** PFOR, TS, FR, (BOURGES, YVON)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006